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SOME NEW APPROACHES TO MIGRANT EDUCATION.

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THE AUTHOR EXAMINES THE FEDERAL AND THE INDIANA STATE  
LAWS CONTROLLING MIGRANT EDUCATION. HE DISCUSSES BOTH THE  
TEXAS MIGRANT SCHOOL PROJECT OF THE LOWER RIO GRANDE VALLEY  
AND THE PROBLEMS WHICH IT PRESENTS TO INDIANA SCHOOLS. THE  
PAPER ALSO LISTS THE PROBLEMS RELATED TO AND THE ELEMENTS  
WHICH SHOULD BE CONSIDERED IN CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT FOR  
MIGRANT STUDENTS. (CL)

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SOME NEW APPROACHES TO MIGRANT EDUCATION

by

Dr. Fred A. Croft

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The feeling of those who work closely with Mexican-American migrants in the field of education is best summed up by a migrant, Mrs. Alvarez who said, "My first belief is in God - and my second belief is in education. An educated person has the whole world in his hands; but uneducated, we have to work with our hands and backs."

In thinking of migrant education, I thought that it might be best to take a look at what the Federal Government is attempting to do for the betterment of migratory labor and some of the laws pending before the Congress which affect migrants. We shall do this with education as our orientation.

Then we shall look at Indiana State Laws, the Compulsory Attendance Law and its enforcement as far as migrants are concerned. We shall then consider the provisions made under various Educational Acts of the 89th Congress and how the provisions of these Acts may be used by local educational agencies in Indiana for migrant education. I would then call your attention to the present state of migrant education in Texas and Indiana with some special emphasis on the Texas Migrant School Project and its effect upon us. I will then end with some new approaches which must be made and which promise, if properly used, a new day for migrant children and their education. These approaches will be in the areas of Testing, Reading, Bi-Lingualism, Teacher-Training, and Curriculum. And all this will be done in the 30 minutes time allotted to me!

The need for child labor legislation is but one example of how far behind the times labor practices in agriculture truly are. Most Americans firmly believe that the evils of child labor are a thing of the past. This is true in most American industry, but not in agriculture. The present provisions permitting the employment of child labor outside school hours is a joke. Crop vacations and special school starting dates are provided for children of farmworkers, so that growers can legally circumvent the law.

The present Fair Labor Standards Act prohibits:

1. employment of children under 16 except by a parent or guardian in manufacturing and non-manufacturing occupations, and
2. authorizes the Secretary of Labor to prohibit hazardous child labor between the ages of 16 and 18, and

3. authorizes the Secretary of Labor to permit child labor between 14 and 16 years of age in non-manufacturing and non-mining operations.

From these provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act there are broad exemptions for agriculture. They do not apply to employment in agriculture outside school hours of the appropriate school district. This means that any child of any age can work in agricultural employment, no matter how hazardous, outside school hours.

The hiring out of children 10 to 13 years old and even younger violates everything we believe in. The only reason this is permitted to go on is that people do not know or do not believe it happens. It does!

Even under the Federal school time regulations, investigations by the Wage and Hour Division of the Department of Labor of 2562 farms disclosed 7972 minors under 16 were illegally employed in agriculture during school hours. Twenty percent, or 1578 were under 9 years of age. More than one half, 4094, were in the 10-13 year old bracket.

When legally children may work in the fields outside school hours, crop vacations and other devices curtailing educational opportunities are stimulated. For instance, in one area local children were enrolled in school, but the enrollment of the migrant children was postponed three weeks so they could harvest cucumbers. Still another state issued permits to economically deprived children, those who needed education above all else, excusing them from school to pick fruit.

A special survey by the U.S. Census Bureau (1961) showed that nearly 400,000 children 10-13 years of age were employed in farm work during the year. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (June 1964) showed that 84,000 children under 14 were employed in paid employment on farms.

The children who work on farms are exposed to unusual work hazards. The National Safety Council indicates that of 14,200 persons killed in all work accidents, 3,300 or one-fourth were in agriculture. National statistics on accidents to minors employed in agriculture are not available, but in twenty-four states there were more than 1,400 serious injuries to children in agriculture in 1964.

These are only statistical confirmations of what our consciences and our good sense made clear; that children employed in agriculture need protection as much as do the children employed in industry.

Many of the people who do stoop labor are not too well educated and the idea of the children working is partly the parents idea, especially when the wage scale is so low. They probably think "Juan or Maria might as well be picking a couple of tomatoes as learning geography. What in the world is he going to do with it? What is it, anyway?"

Decent wages would eliminate the temptation of the parents and the children to have the children work in the fields.

The majority of the culturally alienated live in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas, where the problems which make for this alienation are language and other means of communication with the dominant (and minority) culture.

In the ten (10) counties of south Texas the Mexican-Americans make up 71.5% of the population. The average family income is \$1,789.00 and the average scholastic achievement of Mexican-American adults of 25 years of age and older is 3.1 years of schooling.

When education is essential for qualifying for successful employment, it is impossible to understand how such a situation can longer be countenanced.

The primary efforts in all programs dealing with migrants must be to give the migrant an educational opportunity. The degree of success will depend upon the individual. Some will be educated to leave the migrant stream to find other full time and more rewarding employment. Others will learn to find the best migrant routes so that their time will be better spent. Others will learn to deal effectively with the employers and not be enslaved by crew leaders. Still others will simply be smart enough to realize they no longer need to be the doormats of agriculture, but become working partners with growers in a stronger agricultural economy.

Migrant agricultural workers will always be taken for granted or used and enslaved until they get an education. Without education they will always be at the bottom of the ladder. The educated migrant will no longer permit himself to be treated as though he did not exist as a human being.

The U.S. Department of Labor [Bulletin 264, (1964)] lists ten needed laws or regulations:

1. Child Labor Law
2. Housing regulations
3. Crew leader registration
4. Transportation regulations

5. Minimum wage law
6. Wage payment law
7. Wage collection law
8. Workmen's Compensation law
9. Temporary disability insurance law.
10. Unemployment insurance law.

Of these Indiana has one, A Child Labor Law, from whose provisions of agriculture is, of course, exempt. Indiana has an Advisory Standard on housing, and under fire right now is the law on Housing.

Congress intended to "keep the arteries of commerce free from the pollution by the sweat of child labor" but considerable pollution by children performing agricultural labor was acceptable so long as it was not during school hours.

#### TEXAS FARM BUREAU POLICY:

"The opportunity of youth to obtain employment in agriculture should be protected.

"In most instances the employment of minors in agriculture is socially and economically desirable. Work experience is an essential part of the educational process and develops self-reliance and self-respect.

"The emotional opposition of many people to the employment of minors has led to a harmful limitation of employment opportunity for young people."

#### INDIANA LAWS in Regard to School Attendance

Since 1921 there has been a Compulsory School Attendance Law in Indiana which reads in part:

"Every child between the ages of 7 and 16 shall attend public school or other school taught in the English language....and such child shall attend such school during the entire time the public schools are in session in the school district in which the child lives."

The question of residence versus legal residence has often come up and has been variously interpreted by local educational agencies. The Attorney General's Office of the State of Indiana states that the intention of the law is that all children shall be in school legal residents or not. There are exemptions under the law for certain classes of children, such as the mentally retarded or the physically handicapped. But there are no exemptions for migrant children.

There are severe penalties for parents who do not send their children. They may amount to as much as a \$500 fine and/or six months imprisonment. The penalties are less severe for those who compel or encourage a minor to violate the Act, or any person who hinders or delays an officer of the school in carrying out his duties in trying to get the children in school, \$200 maximum fine or 60 days imprisonment. In one case, of which I am aware, it cost an Indiana grower \$200 for each child he had working during school hours, and I am in favor of this!

The Compulsory School Law is enforced by the Attendance Officers, who may be specially employed for the purpose, or if no one is appointed, it is the duty of the County Superintendent of Schools to see that the laws are enforced.

The duties of the Attendance Officers are spelled out in the Senate Enrollment Act #276, among which duties are; visiting the homes of the children reported absent, or in need of clothing, books, or parental care. He shall visit the factories and other places where children are employed. In other words, the Act does not anticipate that Attendance Officers shall be office people, but field people, getting out to where the people and the children are, not just a record keeper in an office.

And if the Attendance Officer finds that children are being kept from school due to lack of books, etc., there is a Statute which covers this (Burns Ann Stat. 28-512). "If the parent does not have sufficient means to furnish books, school supplies, and clothing necessary to the attendance upon school, the school corporation shall furnish temporary aid for such purpose, which aid shall be allowed and repaid to the school corporation by the township overseer of the poor....upon presentation of an itemized statement of such temporary aid."

Note that the Statute states that "The school corporation shall furnish" and that the aid "shall be allowed and repaid by the township trustee." There is no permissiveness here that I can see.

#### E S E A

Now for a brief look at the often misunderstood, even by school people, Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and its amendments of 1966 as these affect migrant education.

Title I of the Act of 1965 enabled grants by the Office of Education to local educational agencies which were to be used for programs and projects.

- A. Designed to meet the needs of educationally deprived children.
- B. Of sufficient size and scope and quality to give reasonable assurance of success in meeting those needs.

Title II states that the state must take account of the need for textbooks and instructional materials, the title of such textbooks to remain with the school.

Title III specifies the use of federal funds for comprehensive guidance and counseling, remedial instruction, school health, social work services, study periods when school is not regularly in session. There is a special emphasis in this Title of the Act for special educational and related services for persons in rural areas, provisions for mobile educational services and for visiting teacher programs.

The Act does not spell out in detail the welfare and health services which may be funded under the provisions of the ACT. These are only implied. The "Guidelines" however, make this statement:

"For example, fourth graders who are struggling along with second grade primers clearly need to learn to read." This does not suggest that the only way to treat their deficiency in ability to read is giving the children more classes in reading. Without the proper attitude, without enough to eat, without the eyeglasses and the other results of medical diagnosis, the reading class in itself may be a waste of time. Of course, the school is not expected to deal with all the needs of deprived children. However, the school is expected to do what it believes necessary to help such children do as well in school as children from more affluent families. Under this philosophy many medical services have been funded. This has included eyeglasses, hearing aids, hot meals, both breakfast and lunch, dental care and even surgical operations. In short, any of those welfare services and health services necessary for the well-being of the child as these are related to his ability to do well in school, may be performed by the school and funded under the Act.

The New Amendment of the Act (November 3, 1966) states:

"The term Current Expenses means expenditures for free public education including... attendance and health services, pupil transportation services....and net expenditures to cover deficits for food services."

Indiana School people do not seem to be cognizant of these provisions of the Act. More than 450 school districts have participated in Title I funds, but I

can find not one program proposed and funded for migrant children. In some programs migrant children have been included but the exact number of programs and projects including migrant children seem to be almost impossible to obtain without going over each report in detail. Even this procedure would not yield the desired information, as no distinction is made in the yearly reports between the migrant child and the other children of poverty.

Under the new amendment to the Act, the Indiana State Department of Public Instruction will receive <sup>78,098</sup>~~52,500~~ especially earmarked for the education of migratory children. The amount authorized by the 89th Congress was \$300,000 but this amount was not appropriated. The closing days of the 89th Congress were so hectic that they passed many educational bills without the necessary appropriation bills to support them, so the funds already appropriated for education had to be pro-rated among several <sup>disparate</sup>~~desperate~~ programs.

This <sup>78,098</sup>~~52,500~~ is only a beginning and allows us to get our foot in the door. Hopefully the next Congress will make the appropriation called for in the ACT and Indiana will receive the \$300,000 originally allotted. The best way in which the Migrant Ministry, the Migrant Apostolate and AMOS can help is for each person here to take time to write his congressman.

As most of you know, I have made several trips to Texas to discover what is being done in the home base state for migrant children. In the Rio Grande Valley, there are at present 40 schools for migrants in what is known as the Migrant School Project. In these schools, open only to the migrant children are some 32,000 pupils. School meets from 8 to 5 each day, six days a week, with only four holidays during the school year. The school year being from November, when the children return from other states, to late April when the children leave again.

This Migrant School Project has had its difficulties and was not an easy project to start or to fund. The school situation in Texas is analogous to that in Indiana, each local educational agency doing what is right in its own eyes. The Texas Education Agency can only guide and supervise. The local school boards are predominantly Anglo in an area where 75% of the people are Mexican-American, so you might guess at some of the difficulties which school people have encountered. The School Attendance Laws are on the books of the state of Texas, but are haphazardly enforced, especially when it concerns

Mexican-American children. However, school attendance in all the migrant schools averages 98.4% which is higher than that for the Anglo schools. And we say that Mexican-American migrants do not like school!

This Migrant School Project is now in its fourth year, and although it has done much to solve some of the problems of migrant education in the Valley, it further complicates the picture on this end of the road. Our migrant children come from areas in which there are none of these special schools. Some come from areas where they have attended a special school. This adds to the difficulty of proper grade placement of the child in Indiana schools. Attendance officers not familiar with the Migrant School Project properly insist that a migrant child attend school here in the spring and the child and his parents insist that he has completed his school year. The difficulty is more apparent than real, however, if we approach the problem and the parents with some understanding. For even the child who has completed his school year in Texas, can spend his time more profitably in Indiana schools than in Indiana fields. But new and imaginative educational programs must be offered him.

Having spent this much time on background for what I really wanted to say, may I take a few more minutes of your time and call your attention to a few important areas of migrant education? These are: the Instructional Program and Testing, the Curriculum, and the Values of Bi-Lingualism.

We are all agreed as to the complexity of migrant education. We are convinced that the Spanish-speaking migrant child needs proficiency in English and so we are stressing the value of English as a second language. Learning a second language is not necessarily a hardship to those of us who are proficient in our native tongue, can both read and write it well. But the migrant is not bi-lingual, he is "a-lingual" - he has a deficiency in two languages. We expect somehow that migrants, because they speak Spanish, they can read Spanish. They cannot, and putting up signs in Spanish in migrant camps are as valuable as signs in Greek. Add to this the deficiencies of the migrant form of life, mobility, lack of continuity, differences in cultural and religious background, home life, and migrant education as seen in some of its complexity.

Our problem is mainly one of teacher education by which we can put some of our research into practice. There is a great lack of coordination and communication for the dissemination of the findings of research about migrants.

For instance, we need to know what kind of disadvantage we are talking about, cultural, economic, language deprived? Of them all, in our English speaking society the language handicap is the most serious.

Most of us from our cradle have learned to speak our native tongue. Here is where we need to start in teaching English. Day Care Centers are fine but they are usually an enrichment experience, and these enrichment experiences are not enough. They are too unstructured for the need, and the teaching of English is neglected - in fact, very little is being done in structured or planned teaching.

We are spending too much time in our Remedial Schools and in the public schools for that matter on evaluation and diagnostic techniques. Usually the diagnostic instruments we use are not adequate. Research has indicated that they are almost valueless. There is nothing new about the tests we are using, and their use will not do anything but reinforce what we already know.

What does a testing program really tell us about the migrant child? Not much! We have known the differences in syntax etc. of the Spanish language for more than 100 years. Why do it all over again?

In teaching migrant children the Language Experience Method is not to be recommended. There are too many pupil disabilities to make it an effective method. I would recommend the Basal Reading System, supplemented by an intensive phonics program. Take Ginn and Company or Scott Foreman and teach these by the phonic method.

There is paucity of funds for teacher training in migrant education. When we have workshops, we usually have a group of teachers listening to a bunch of professors lecture. How does this affect the teaching? Most of the lecturers are "outside experts" who know less about the child than does the teacher. In our Schools of Education throughout the Southwest, where 85% of our Spanish culture people live, not one school has one course on teaching the Spanish-speaking child.

In our teacher training, as in our educational programs, we must begin with the child and where the child lives, and work by laboratory experiences, by demonstrations and by experimentation and innovation. People in education are not creative enough or innovative enough. For instance, we have been teaching "English as a Second Language" for 30 years, and what we are learning now we knew 30 years ago. We are starting all over again.

There is one best way to teach Juan or Maria or Jose, but each one is different because each child is different. And the longer we delay the instruction of the child the more harm we do that child. We think we can repair this damage as the child progresses and so we run so-called Remedial Programs. To my mind, no Remedial Program for the upper grades is worth a damn. We must get at the child as early as possible. And here we need to set some priorities, an intensive program of instruction and the earlier the better.

We need to use with the migrant child some manipulative devices, in order to involve him in the learning. We need those things which involve the child tactilely rather than the "look-see" approach. A basic system of manipulative or tactile learning best fits the migrant child.

How long do we use this approach? Well, ultimately we must switch to the aural and visual systems, but this again depends upon the individual child.

Basically, we need an eclectic system and eclectic procedure -- but this goes back to teacher training and teacher education programs, and we do not have realistic teacher training programs for migrant children.

How do we use materials, and what materials do we use?

The Texas Migrant School Project has no standard curriculum. In Texas, as in Indiana, there is an approved list of textbooks from which the school authorities may choose what they like. In the whole area of curriculum there is much rigidity, and a rigid curriculum is a drawback to teaching migrant children.

It is interesting to note that one of the first problems teachers ask about is "What materials do I use?" Why can't we train teachers to make their own curriculum? We all want "a package deal" or "instant education." Some one else beside the teacher is therefore doing the curriculum building for all of education. Perhaps the real builders of curriculum in American Education are the textbook publishers. Too often we think of the textbook as the curriculum, when in reality everything and anything that goes on in the classroom is the curriculum. Are the textbooks the educational program? Too often so, I am afraid.

Most textbooks are geared to the WASP child and we have geared most of the curriculum to the traditions of the New England Middle Class Anglo person, and the migrant child is simply out of his element in a standard curriculum.

I would like to list six curriculum problems with which we need to deal in migrant education:

1. We need to diagnose the real life learning needs of the migrant child. To do this we must get out of the classroom into the homes in which these people live.

2. We must specify those objectives in the programming and hence the curriculum which will be most meaningful to the child, not the teacher. We must select as curriculum those things that will make a difference in the child and be related to life as he knows it.

3. We constantly fail to understand the relationship between teacher behavior and child behavior.

4. The selection of the content of the educational program must be done carefully. Which "worth" is more important to the migrant child?

5. We need to organize materials well, both as to scope and learning sequence.

6. Finally we need to evaluate what we are doing in the light of the culture of the child, not our own.

Generally, we have failed to understand what cultural differences mean. The American emphasis, for instance, is on the ability to DO, the Mexican-American emphasizes the human relationships. We need to understand what culture is.

And what price does the migrant child pay for his acculturation? what happens to the individual child, what values do we give him in place of the ones he already has? Are our values better? We downgrade the migrant child when we downgrade his culture.

So a good curriculum - all that goes on in the classroom, from teacher behavior to child behavior - can be supported by a good course of study, but the course of study should only be the guideline from which we must frequently depart. And some good criteria for a curriculum would:

1. Fit the needs of each child.
2. Give the child a healthy concept of himself.
3. Focuses on the child's development.  
("Covering the lesson" is not a criteria)
4. Takes cultural differences into account.
5. Contains a variety of materials to provide multi-avenues of learning.
6. Within which different kinds of learning may take place.
7. Sets out to solve inter-personal relationships and inter-group relationships.

8. Does not follow the textbook slavishly.
9. Allows for the development of experimentation and innovation.
10. Uses the "systems" concept, not piecemeal bits of learning.

May I close with some comments about Di-Lingualism?

The Texas schools are required by law, as are the Indiana schools required by law, to teach in English. This to my mind is a mistake. To many educators working with Spanish-speaking people this is a mistake, and many of them in Texas and elsewhere are frankly breaking the law and are teaching in Spanish. The Texas Migrant Schools are teaching the migrant children to read and write in Spanish and gradually there is creeping in an experiment in teaching in Spanish. How does the migrant child learn mathematics best? If we teach him that "two and two is four" or "dos y dos es quatro"? If we can get the concept across, the language comes more easily.

I am, of course, in agreement with the basic thesis of most Anglo educators that our migrant children should become thoroughly proficient in English, for their future lies in the English-speaking world. However, it has been pretty well established in many countries and pretty thoroughly documented in the history of education that the second language (in this case English) is learned best if the vernacular (Spanish in this case) is encouraged and developed.

My own conviction is that, like gold, language development is where you find it. I am convinced that if all possible Spanish should be used as one of the languages of the schools which migrant children attend. The children on the playground of our schools and in the circle of the family will use Spanish. Let's teach them good Spanish. Imagine yourself if you will, as a child in a school where only English is used and where the language which you and your parents know is taboo. What do you think this would do to your image of yourself and your people?

Many of us admire that person who is at home in two languages. This is a "plus" feature of migrant education which must be encouraged.

To the Mexican-American child Spanish is the primary symbol of his membership in La Raza, just as English is for us, our primary symbol of membership in our America. To destroy this is to hit at the very foundations which have kept the Mexican-American family life from disintegrating. We have, through

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the slavery system, taken away from the Negro this great cultural advantage and are reaping now what we in past years have sown. Let us not do it to the Mexican-American. Fortunate indeed is that child who goes to a school where English and Education are not synonymous.

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